

INTRODUCTION
TO THE

ART OF PAINTING

IN
OIL COLOURS.

BY

J. CAWSE,

PUPIL TO THE LATE JOHN OPIE, R. A.

Professor of Painting

AT THE

ROYAL ACADEMY.

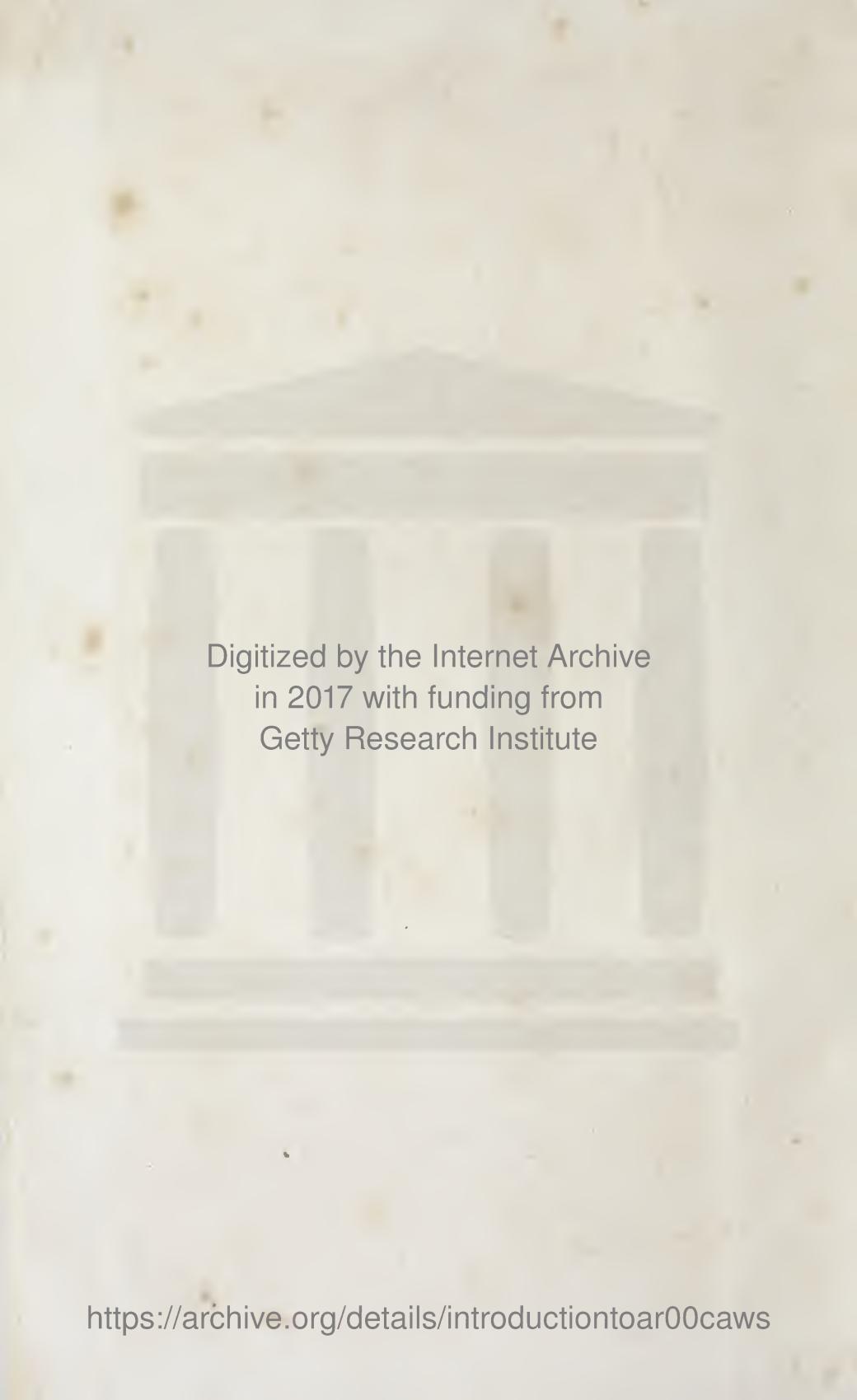
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Edm^o T. Browne

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BY J. CAWSE,
PUPIL TO THE LATE JOHN OPIE, R.A.
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WITH PLATES,

EXPLANATORY OF THE DIFFERENT PALETTES USED IN THE PROGRESS OF
PAINTING A PORTRAIT OR LANDSCAPE.

SECOND EDITION.

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

A CONCISE and systematic introduction to the use of the palette and colours has long been a desideratum to the student in the art of painting; for, of the many publications on this part of the art, most have been critical or theoretical, and none practical. The design of this work is to remove those difficulties which have hitherto been a great and serious hindrance to the improvement of the student, and to give the beginner in oils such information as will enable him to paint portraits, landscapes, &c. with a truth of local colouring.

The necessity of such a work as this being obvious, the Author assures the student in painting that it is calculated for a familiar, and with moderate application, a successful guide to the attainment, in a very short time, of a competent power over the palette. The directions respecting colours, oils, varnishes, &c. will be found extremely

useful, inasmuch as they may be the means of saving the time of the student. It may not be amiss to observe, that the Author does not pretend to furnish instructions for the treatment of the chiaro-scuro, light and shade, which is best attained by the study and contemplation of the masters most celebrated in that department of the art ; neither does he give directions for placing the sitter for a portrait. He merely lays down a few rules for colouring, which he has seen applied with success by the first Master this country has produced.

INTRODUCTION

TO

PAINTING IN OIL COLOURS.

COLOURS.

WHITE is a calx of lead, produced by subjecting plates of lead to the fumes of vinegar.

BLACK is made from vine twigs and ivory, by calcining in a crucible.

BLUE.—*Ultramarine* is extracted from lapis lazuli, a stone of a bright blue colour, and is often sold very much adulterated. If, when brought to a red heat, it stands that trial without changing colour, it is genuine. As a small quantity only need be subjected to this test, a comparison may be made at very little expense with the part that has not been exposed to the fire. If adulterated, it becomes blackish or pale.

Prussian blue is produced by a combination of iron with an acid of a peculiar nature, distinguished by the name of prussic acid.

YELLOW.—Light ochre and brown ochre are native earths; and when calcined produce different shades, which are denominated either light red or brown red, according to their different degrees of intensity.

RED.—*Light red* is light ochre calcined.

India red is a native earth brought from India, and, when purified by washing, is of the greatest use in making numerous beautiful tints.

Lake and *carmine* are extracts from cochineal, madder, Brazil wood, and shreds of scarlet cloth: they are transparent and powerful glazes over the opaque blues, reds, and yellows.

UMBER, a kind of clay, mixed with a small quantity of oxide of iron. When calcined it becomes what is commonly called burnt umber.

VERMILION, a chemical composition of mercury and Chinese sulphur. Of the different kinds sold, the common is the best for the purposes of portrait-painting.

The above are the colours generally used by all artists, either for painting portraits, landscapes, drapery, &c.; though many add to the list the sienas, burnt and unburnt, brown pink and Vandyke brown, Cologne earth,

and others. But to the beginner in painting I would recommend as little addition as possible ; as the using of but few colours will prevent the confusion which I have often observed on many palettes, and which has naturally been transferred to the pictures.

OILS.

All the menstrua employed in painting should be, for a very obvious reason, limpid and clear: limpid, because if they are glutinous, this quality obstructs the easy motion of the pencil, and detracts from the brilliancy and the sharpness of the execution ; and clear, because the nearer they approach to being colourless, the less of any foreign mixture they communicate to the tone or hue of a picture. If, therefore, any menstruum could be obtained both limpid and colourless, the discoverer would deserve to be hailed as a real benefactor to the art of painting.

After trying every new invention that seemed likely to open a door to improvement, and assisting in the trial of every resin and gum in the list, I am convinced that the best article an artist can use is oil ; for though Canada balsam and balsam copaivi are colourless, or nearly so, still they are so glutinous and liable to crack when dry, that they are equally unsafe,—to say nothing of the addition of sugar, or acetate, of lead, without which they will not dry. It is with these two gums that

all the attempts have been made to find a substitute for oil.

The vehicle, therefore, which I would recommend, is a mixture of oil,—either boiled linseed, or poppy, or nut oil,—with about one-third of good clear spirit of turpentine. It may be mixed to the proportion of half oil and half turpentine.

I am the more earnest in this recommendation, as I have witnessed the ill effects of the numerous nostrums in the shape of *megelps*, *gumtions*, *impastoes*, &c. which obtrude themselves on the young artist's notice, and which he is induced to employ, under the idea of their abridging his labour and heightening the brilliancy of his colouring. This they may do for a short time, but in the end they inevitably fail; for that tint of colour which, when laid upon the picture, is composed (and it generally is so) of more than half varnish and oil, must, when dry, change its hue. On the other hand, the mixture which I have recommended never changes but for the better; and the use of it removes the necessity of allowing for the colours changing or getting lower in tone, which must be done in using the above-mentioned *megelps*—a practice which, adopted from a desire to be beforehand with time, ruins one half of the pictures that are painted.

VARNISHES.

These are mastic varnish and copal. The former is preferable, as it is easily removed from the picture in case of its becoming dirty. The longer the time that is suffered to intervene between finishing and varnishing the picture, the better.

The best varnish for a picture that has been recently painted, and is intended for exhibition, is a mixture of brandy, white of egg, and a few drops of juice of garlic, applied to the picture in a horizontal position. The garlic preserves the picture from being dirtied by flies. To remove this preparation, use a sponge and clean water till no froth appears, and when dry, apply the varnish.

GROUNDS.

As it is generally supposed that the Venetian masters owed much of the harmony, brightness, and durability of their colouring to the preparation of their grounds for painting on, I here insert the mode of preparing that ground, according to the receipt of Sebastian Grandi, an Italian colour-grinder and maker, who received from the Society of Arts their honorary silver medal, and a premium of fifty guineas. His several communications relative to the preparation of grounds were most respect-

ably certified to the Society by Benjamin West, late President of the Royal Academy; Sir Thomas Lawrence, his successor; and the following Royal Academicians: John Opie, M. A. Shee, J. Northcote, J. Faringdon, Richard Cosway, and P. J. de Loutherbourg, who all confirmed the good quality of the grounds prepared by Mr. Grandi. The materials are extremely cheap, as well as easy to be procured, and none of the processes for preparing them are at all difficult.

The Venetian Ground.

Break grossly the bones of sheeps' trotters, and boil them in water till cleared from their grease; then put them into a crucible and calcine, and afterwards reduce or grind them to powder in a mortar. To some thin paste add an equal quantity of the pulverised bone-ashes, and grind the whole mass well together. This mixture forms the ground for the panel. When the panel has been well pumiced, some of the ground is to be rubbed on with a pumice-stone, that it may be incorporated with the panel. Another coat of the composition is next applied with a brush, when it is suffered to dry, the surface being afterwards rubbed over with sand-paper. A thin coat of the composition is then applied with a brush; and if a coloured ground be required, a coat or two must be added, so as to complete the absorbent ground. When a panel thus prepared is wanted to be painted on, it must be rubbed over

with a coat of raw linseed or poppy oil, as drying oil will destroy the absorbent quality of the ground ; and the painter's colours should also be ground very fine.

The grounds thus prepared do not crack. They may be painted in a very short time after being laid ; and, from their absorbent quality, allow the business to be proceeded in with facility and better effect than with those prepared in the usual mode.

Various other grounds are in use among artists, such as the unabsorbent one sold at the colour-shops, commonly called primed cloth ; and another lately introduced into practice, made by pasting paper over canvass, or book-muslin over primed cloth or panel. But, whatever may be the qualities of the different grounds recommended to the young artist, he must remember, that painting is an art not to be communicated by any secret process ; and that though Venetian grounds are very good things in their place, still neither the use of them, nor any nostrum in the shape of varnish, &c. will alone make a painter. The only way for him to make improvement certain, is to consider them as assistants only towards the great end of art — the imitation of nature.

There are various tints of coloured grounds for painting on. Those are best which approach nearest to white ; because all whites and light colours sink into the grounds upon which they are laid.

*Materials necessary for painting a Portrait
in Oil Colours.*

An EASEL and rest-stick for the hand.

A PALETTE of walnut-tree, rose, or satin-wood, to lay the colours used in painting on.

PRIMED CLOTH, or panel, prepared either with muslin or the Venetian ground.

A PALETTE TIN, technically called a *Dipper*, to hold the mixture of oil and turpentine; and another to hold turpentine spirits, for washing brushes in, and some rags to wipe them on.

HOG-HAIR TOOLS of this size :



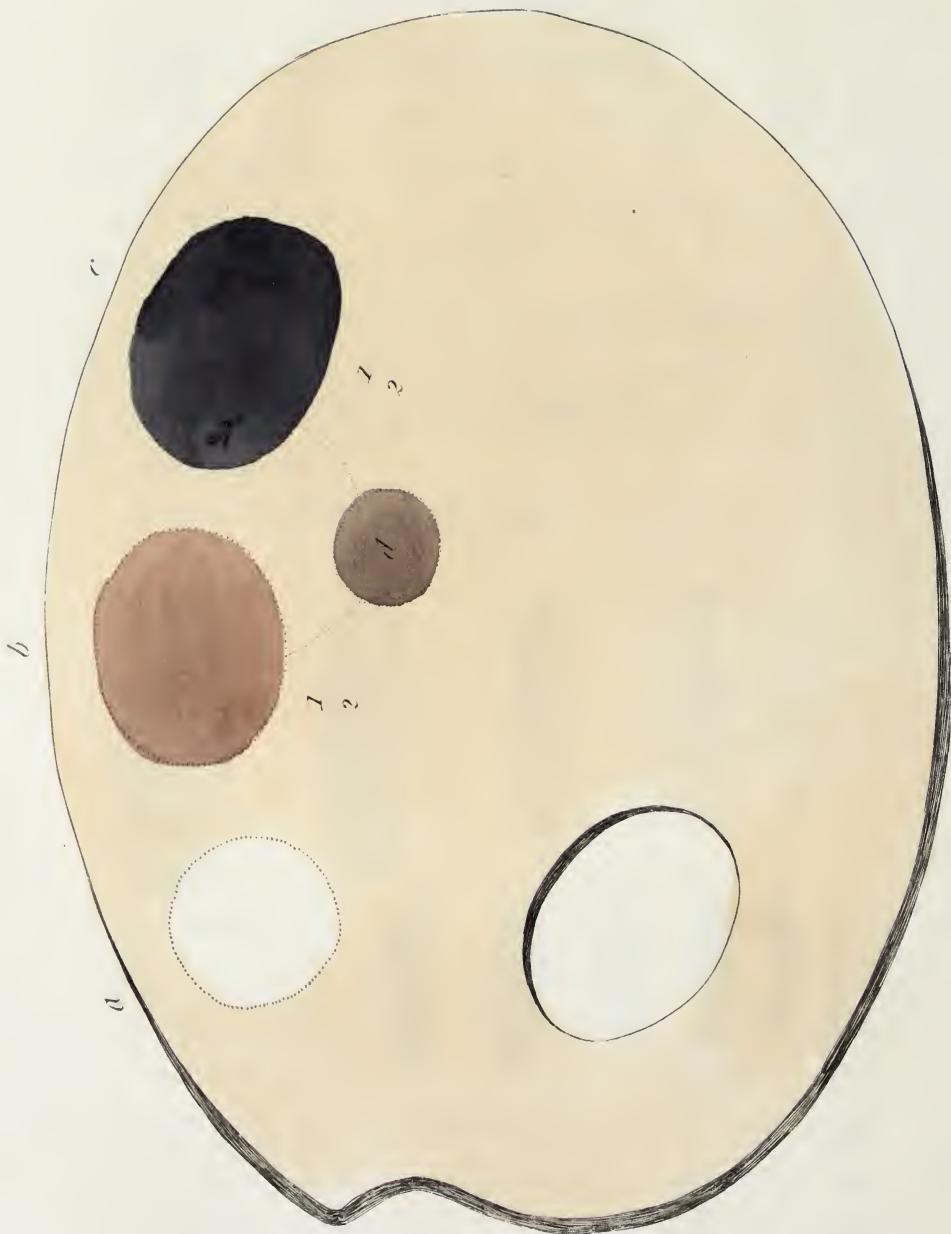
FITCH PENCILS

and

SABLE PENCILS
of this size :



CAMEL-HAIR PENCILS may be used with great effect in the finer parts of the picture. Pliability, and the capability of being drawn to a point and continuing so, are the chief qualities of good brushes, and without these they are useless.



*A Palette of Colours laid for a first Sitting or
beginning of a Portrait.*

- a. White, either Nottingham white or flake white.
- b. India red . . . 1—2 } are tints made by the addition of white.
- c. Black . . . 1—2 }
- d. A tint made by mixing India red and black gradually with white, and called the shade tint.

The brushes used in this sitting are hog-hair tools, of a sufficient size to leave the colour smooth and broad; and sable pencils and small fitches, to mark the drawing of the features, &c.

The oils—boiled oil and turpentine, mixed in the proportion of half oil and half turpentine.

FIRST SITTING.

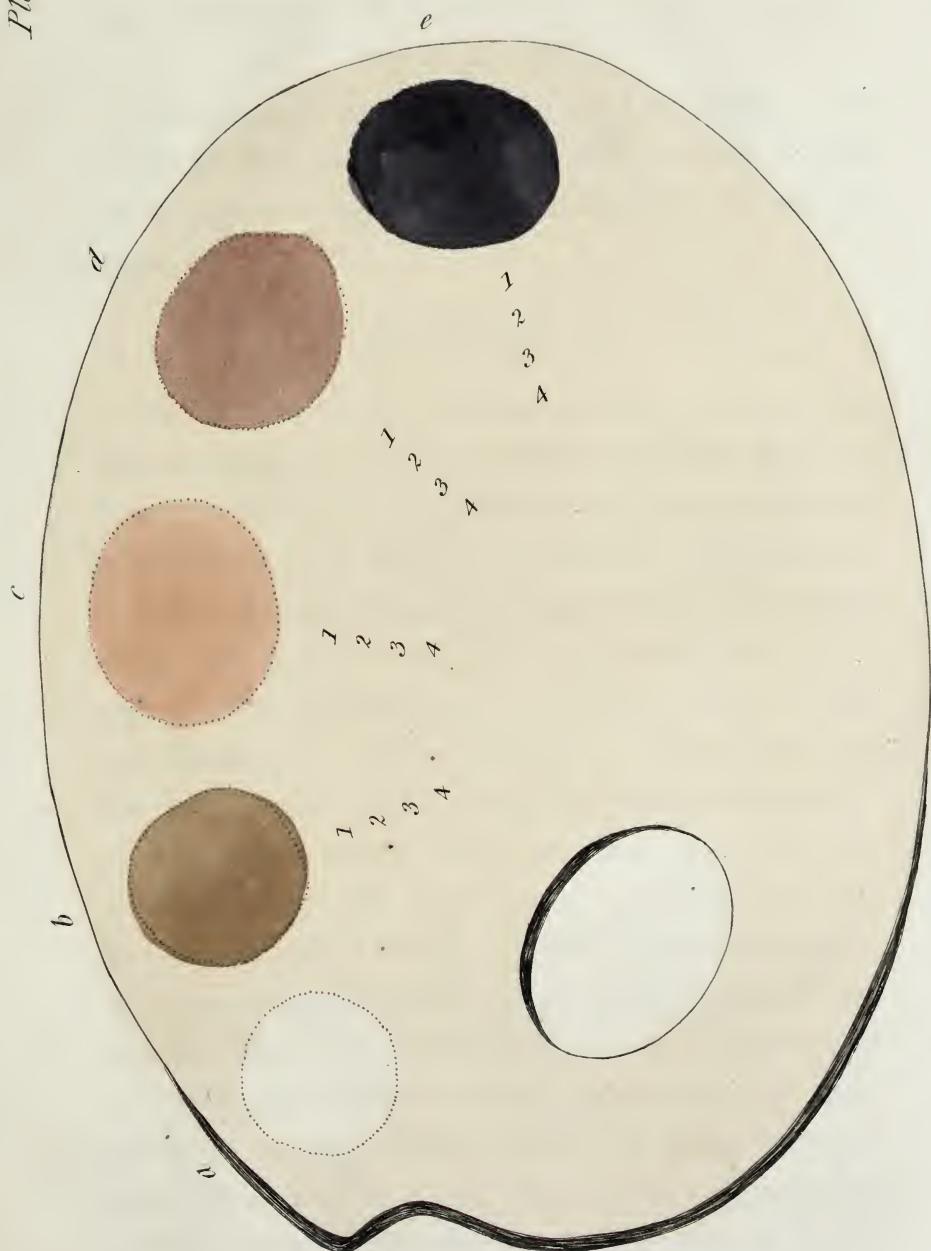
The great object of a portrait being resemblance to nature, the artist, on setting to work, should adopt the means that will mechanically insure him success. The drawing, therefore, both of the figure and head, particularly the features, should be exactly correct; and if the size of life, the distance between the corner of the eye and corner of the mouth under it, may be measured and marked on the canvass. In short, unless the drawing is perfect, it is in vain to attempt proceeding with the colouring part.

The drawing completed, the first business is to make out all the forms with the shade tint, 1 and 2, as if the portrait was to be finished with that tint only. The lights should be painted with the tint of India red and white, b, 1 and 2, and worked to the complexion, and both lights and shades united together with a tint made of black and white mixed to a pearly gray, and altogether blended with a long softener, or what is called a badger-hair tool; and after rubbing in the back ground with the remaining colour on your palette, the first sitting is completed. The nearer the general effect of the picture approaches to a pearly silver gray, in the better state it is for the second sitting.

*A Palette of Colours laid for a second Sitting of
a Portrait.*

- a. Flake white.
- b. Brown ochre.
- c. Light red.
- d. India red.
- e. Black.

1, 2, 3, 4, Tints made by the mixture of white with each of the colours, and graduating from 1, the tint made with most of the pure colour and white, to 4, made with most white and least colour, and carefully matched in the carnation tints to the complexion of the sitter.



The brushes used in this sitting are small hog-hair brushes and fitches, with the addition of sables for the finer parts.

The oils are the mixture of oil and turpentine; and as the portrait advances towards the finishing sitting, nut or poppy oil may be substituted in the mixture for boiled oil.

SECOND SITTING.

The second sitting commences with passing a thin coat of poppy oil over the picture, and then wiping it nearly all off with a clean rag, so as to leave very little more than a moist dew on the picture. Then proceed to lay in the carnation tints (which must be previously mixed, and matched with the complexion of the sitter,) with a stiff fitch pencil, and be careful to keep in sight the likeness of colour and form. Then glaze the shadows, which in red or sanguine complexions always have a hue of purple, while the shadows of fair complexions incline invariably to gray; and remembering that it is the nature of shade to be cool and transparent, be sure your shadows at the side of fair eyebrows, nose, lips, &c. are so; for nothing gives so much the character of vulgarity as the shadows being made warm with those dashes of red and yellow which are always seen in portraits executed in a bad taste. In uniting the lights and shade, avoid mealiness, which is occasioned by their coming together without the intervening gray tint; and

if the general appearance of the picture is clean, with the drawing preserved and the likeness improved, the portrait is in order for the finishing sitting.

*A Palette of Colours laid for a last or finishing
Sitting for a Portrait.*

The colours here used are the same as those for the second sitting, with the addition of vermillion, lake, and Prussian blue, which may be changed for ultramarine.

The oils used are nut or poppy oil, with the addition of spirits of turpentine.

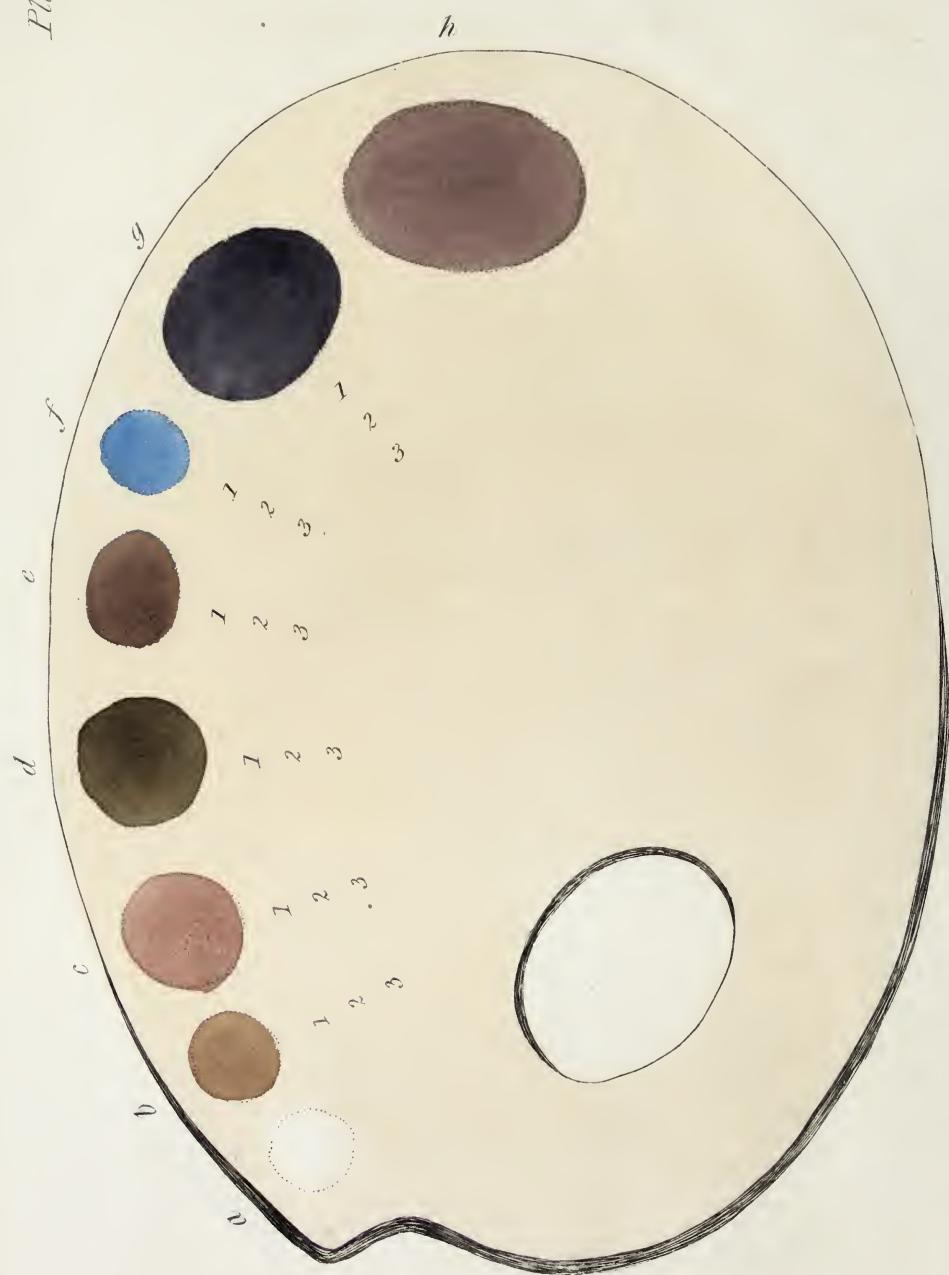
The brushes are fine sable pencils and camel-hair.

1, 2, 3, are tints made from the colours by their mixture with white ; and in this, as in the preceding sitting, they must be matched to the complexion of the sitter.

THIRD SITTING.

The third and last sitting is wholly employed in going over the features, improving the lights, and correcting the glazings with the pure colours and tints ; and, as it is of the greatest consequence to preserve the spirit of touch, this should be done without softening. It is recommended to consider, before the application of a tint, that the effect may be produced with one touch of the





pencil, and if it cannot be applied without hazard, it will be better not to attempt the alteration; as it often happens that likeness, the most valuable property in a portrait, is irrecoverably lost by an injudicious endeavour to improve.

In the finishing sitting many artists use what is called a retouching varnish, with which the picture is slightly varnished previously to finishing: it is of such a nature as to admit of painting on for days before it completely dries. The employment of poppy or nut oil in the last sittings renders the use of this kind of varnish needless, as those oils are rather slow in drying, and consequently afford sufficient time for retouching.

A Palette of Colours laid for painting the Back-ground of a Portrait.

- a. White.
- b. Brown ochre.
- c. India red.
- d. Raw umber.
- e. Burnt umber.
- f. Blue.
- g. Black.
- h. A tint made of equal parts of black and India red, called the shade tint.

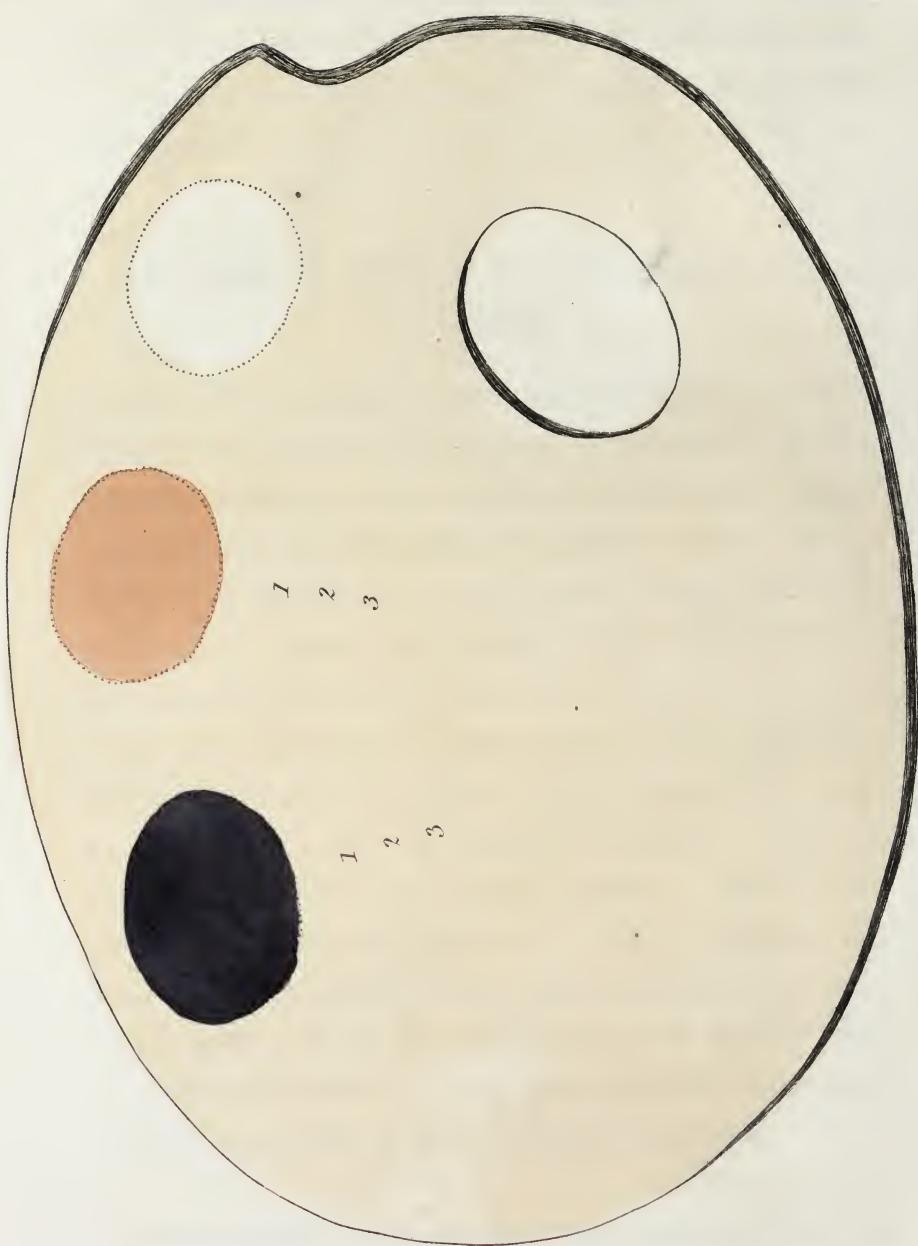
1, 2, 3, are tints made from the respective colours.

The oils used are the mixture made with two parts of boiled oil and one part of spirits of turpentine; and the brushes used are principally hog-hair tools and stiff fitch pencils.

Directions for painting the Back-ground of a Portrait.

With the tint made of black and India red, lay in the back-ground, and let the colour be levigated with the mixture, so that it may be laid transparent and clean; and increase it in strength in the shaded parts. Then, while it is wet, paint in those tints of colour that are required to imitate the objects to be represented in your back-ground, and endeavour to finish it at once; keeping in mind, that it is the practice of the best masters to have very few objects in their back-grounds, and to make the whole as retiring as possible. With a softener then blend the whole together. But, if your back-ground has no objects in it, which is commonly the case in a portrait with the head the size of life, on a three-quarters cloth, be careful that your back-ground is sufficiently broken in its tints of colour, that your sitter may not seem as if he existed in a vacuum.

Transparency, harmony, and atmospheric purity of colour, are the technical requisites of a well-painted back-ground. Thus Du Fresnoy says:—" Let the field or ground of the picture be pleasant, free, transient,



light, and well united with colours which are of a friendly nature to each other, and of such a mixture that there may be something in it of every colour that composes your work, as it were the contents of your palette.”

“ Variety of tints, very nearly of the same tone, employed in the same figure, and often upon the same part, with moderation, contribute much to harmonise.”

DE PILES.

A Palette of Colours laid for Painting by Lamp-Light from the Living Model.

The colours used are white, light red, and black.

1, 2, 3, are tints made from each colour by the addition of white.

The oil is the usual mixture of boiled oil and spirits of turpentine.

The brushes are small hog-hair brushes and fitches, according to the size of the figure and picture.

I derived much improvement, when I commenced using oil colours, by painting by lamp-light my studies from the living models at the Royal Academy; though at the outset I experienced some difficulties, arising from my picture appearing very dirty in the flesh tints, when

viewed by day-light, till I was advised by the late Mr. Barry, Professor of Painting there, to use the annexed palette, which I found completely to answer every purpose, as the flesh tints that are painted with it have a very slight difference in appearance when seen by day-light, and may only want improving with the finishing palette used for portraits.

A Palette of Colours laid for the beginning or first Sitting of a Landscape Painter from Nature.

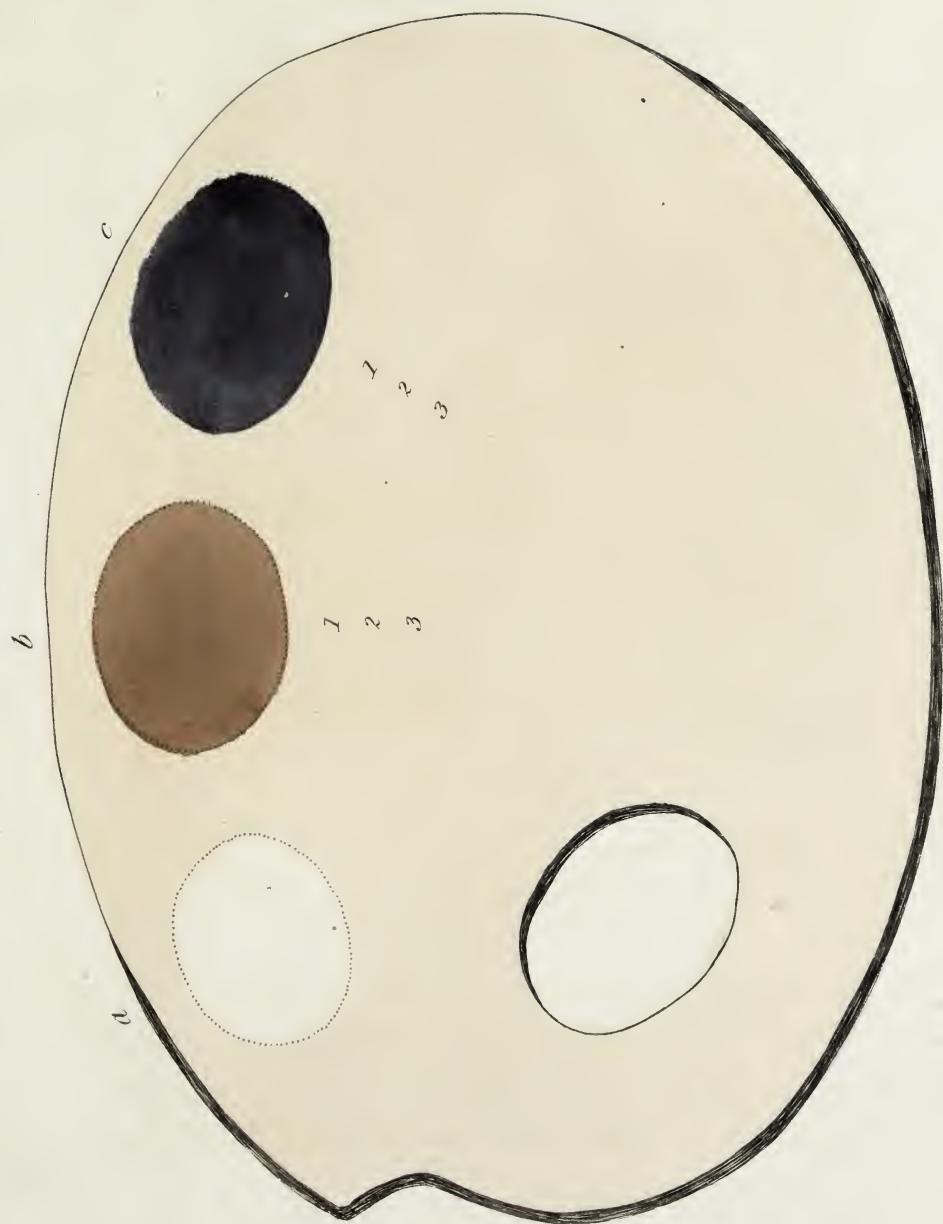
- a. White, either flake or Nottingham white.
- b. Brown ochre.
- c. Blue black.

1, 2, 3, tints made by the addition of white, graduating to 3.

The oil used is the mixture of boiled oil and turpentine, and the brushes are hog-hair and stiff fitches.

Your drawing made, the forms, &c. may be rubbed in with a tint made with burnt umber and lake, well mixed together, leaving the colour of the ground or cloth* for the light, using the colour thin, in the manner

* I have found mill-board of great use in painting studies from nature: it is easily prepared for the purpose of painting on, by passing over it some thin paste, which takes away its extreme absorbency.





of washing with India ink ; this done, let it dry. Then commence the first layer of colour with the annexed palette, and paint the sky with a full body of colour, making out the forms of the principal clouds ; the lighter it is left, the better it will support the finishing colours. Proceed next to the faintest distances, graduating down to the fore-ground ; and lastly sweeten the whole together, which leaves the work in good order for finishing.

A Palette of Colours laid for finishing a Landscape.

- a. Flake white.
- b. Light ochre.
- c. Brown ochre.
- d. Brown pink.
- e. Burnt siena.
- f. Burnt umber.
- g. Lake.
- h. Black.
- i. India red.
- k. Prussia or Antwerp blue.
- l. Ultramarine.

1, 2, 3, are tints made by the mixture of white, from 1 with most pure colour to 3 with least.

The oils used are the mixture of boiled oil and turpentine, and, towards the finish of the picture, nut or

poppy oil, as, from their slowness in drying, they afford time for retouching.

The business of finishing is to glaze and heighten with pure colours the chiaro-scuro preparation made with the first palette. Prussian blue, brown pink, lake, and burnt umber, are the most useful and powerful glaziers, and produce, when mixed, every variety of tint; and these should be carefully matched on the palette with the objects intended to be represented, before they are applied to the canvass.

The same general rules that have been given for portrait-painting equally apply to the painting of landscape. Correct drawing, and attention to truth and clearness of colour, are not less requisite in the one than in the other, since the object of both is the imitation of Nature.

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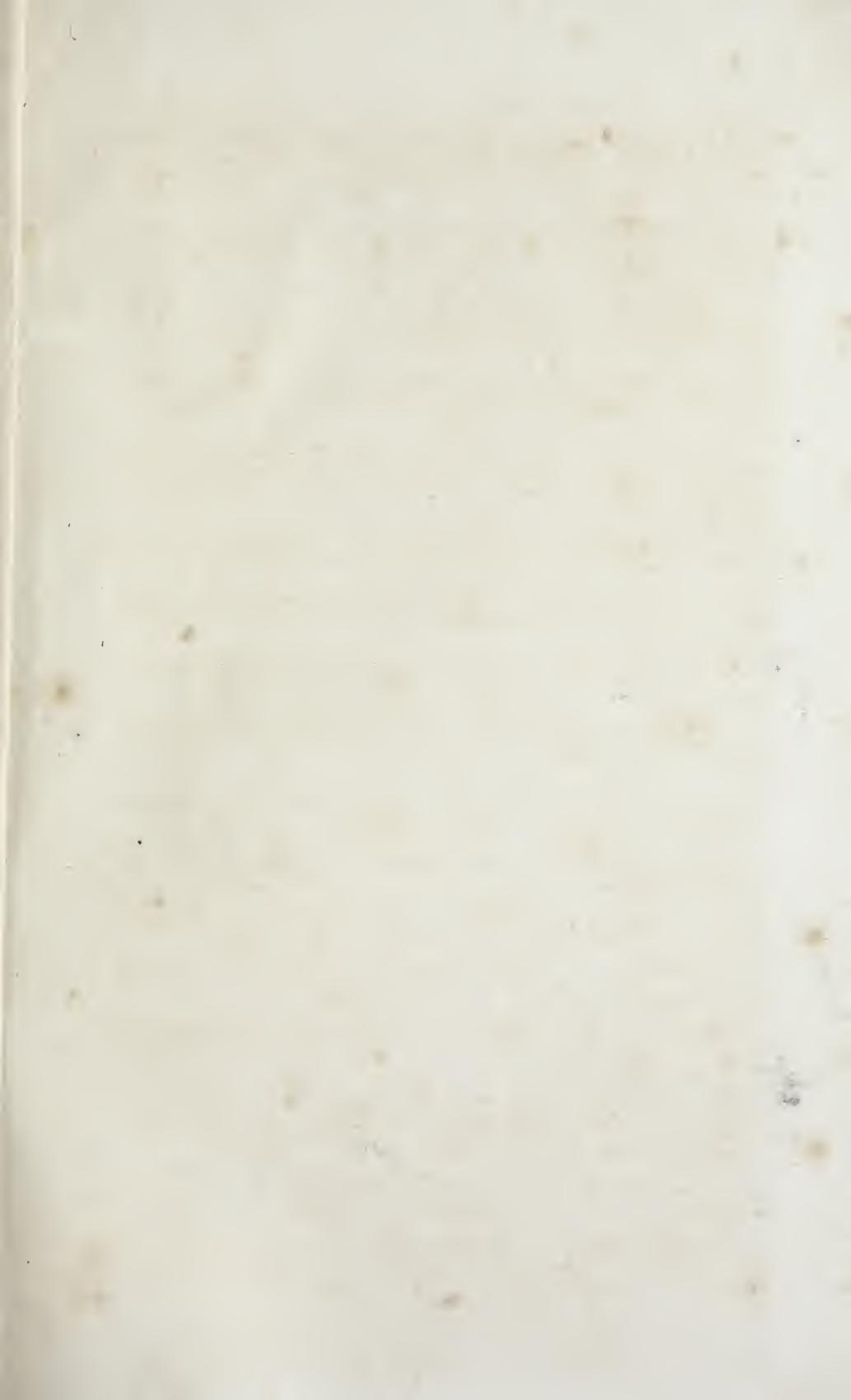
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